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Dubai to host architectural awards, design competition for city landmark

State building, sports complex or travel terminal desired

Paris has the Eiffel Tower and Sydney the Opera House. Now Dubai intends to have a monument that symbolises the city, and has invited some of the world's best architects to submit proposals for its design.

The monument's conception will be guided by the ThyssenKrupp Elevator Architecture Awards, an annual gathering of international designers. The awards are usually held in Europe, but this year will take place in Dubai, the first time the event is to be held in the Middle East.

"Just like Egypt has the Pyramids and France has the Eiffel Tower, Dubai needs a structure to define the city," said Hussain Nasser Lootah, the acting director general of Dubai Municipality.

He said the new structure would rival the Burj Al Arab as a symbol of the city, but, unlike the exclusive hotel, it would be open to everyone.

The proposed site for the monument is the Zabeel Park, a public area in the centre of Dubai.

The competition places few restrictions on architects and gives

them an uncommon degree of creative freedom. There is no theme, and few limits as to what kind of structure they can design.

Proposals for a state building, a sporting complex or a transport terminal will be accepted, as will designs for community spaces.

"The creation of an emblem structure will symbolise the new face of Dubai, as well as promote tourism, recreational, and cultural activities," said Mr Lootah.

A jury of architects from seven countries will review the submissions and select the winning project.

"We look forward to receiving and honouring the broad range of concepts for the emblem structure," said Javier del Pozo, the chief executive of ThyssenKrupp Elevator Southern Europe, Africa & Middle East.

"Dubai has one of the most impressive skylines in the world and is already an extraordinary destination for global business, commerce and travel."

This, he added, was the reason Dubai had been selected to host this year's event.

The awards are usually hosted in a city undergoing fundamental change, to which architects are invited to make their expertise available and contribute to the city's evolution.

"To catalyse its image and energy, the concentration and attraction of talents and resources, we have invited Dubai to play host to our international Architecture Award competition. Our goal is to promote and reveal the potency of new work," said Mr del Pozo.

Mr del Pozo said the competition to design an iconic building would test the abilities of competitors to deliver something special.

"We are seeking state of the art, unique designs that provide a 'return on investment' to the public good by attending to issues of green building and local climate."

The winning design will respond to townscape and scenic aspects, and include facilities for recreation, entertainment and conferencing.

The competition will be held under the auspices of the International Union of Architects, Mr del Pozo added.

Proposals will be accepted until the end of February 2009 and the winner will be announced three months later in May.

The winning architect will also be given a US\$100,000 (Dh376,000) prize.

More than 400 architects took part in last year's awards, which were held in Granada, Spain.

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Competition criteria

- 1) The proposed structure should be a unique landmark with a maximum height of 170m
- 2) The designer may consider any innovative form and construction technique and should use materials that adhere to green building principles
- 3) The proposed structure should contain cultural and conference facilities
- 4) It should include a local children's library and a conference space
- 5) The total floor area for these facilities should be approximately 800 square metres
- 6) A basement parking for 30 cars could be included
- 7) The proposed structure should contain a cafe, possibly over two levels, and be high enough to offer a scenic view of the city
- 8) Commercial offices and residential premises designs will not be accepted into the competition
- 9) Design submissions need only be conceptual at this stage